

DEC 01 1999

MS. SCHWEIZER: For the record, my name is Vanessa Schweizer.

For a moment I want to take a second to wave the great American flag and talk about how the United States happens to be proud to instill in its youth a sense of pride in its government, many of the, I guess you say, unique aspects of our government, like the balance of power, democracy, but still protecting the rights of the minority. Our schools consequently have things like model congresses and student governments which are modeled after the way that our government is set up.

And another extracurricular activity which is modeled after the policy making which our government does is debate. That is kind of the background where I'm coming from.

I don't know if anyone here has ever done debate, but something you learned about policy making is that in order to have a rational acceptable policy, you must do a number of things. The first thing you must do is demonstrate that you need the plan. The second thing you need to do is propose a coherent plan.

The third thing you need to do is demonstrate that this plan will solve the need that you say basically puts forth the reasons why we would have the plan. You also have to show that the plan is net beneficial, that you are going to get more benefits out of the plan than you are going to get disadvantages.

And you also have to demonstrate that the plan is the best one, and the only way you are going to know whether or not it is the best is by looking to alternatives.

Now the reason why I'm bringing all of this up is because in debate we also learned that if any one of these components is missing or if anywhere your plan falls short in any one of these areas, it is better to just stuck with not doing the plan at all, and instead, sticking with the status quo.

1... So with that known we should look to whether or not the Yucca Mountain proposal is a good plan of action, by first looking at whether or not a need has been demonstrated. Now I find it kind of

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1 cont. disheartening that Congress in its infinite wisdom in passing the Nuclear Waste Policy Act has told the Department of Energy that the EIS need not consider the need for a repository.

Now Congress didn't say that the EIS doesn't have to consider the need of Yucca Mountain being a repository. The EIS doesn't even have to consider if we need a repository at all. That seems kind of weird.

This alone is a reason to go with the no action alternative, because we can't even demonstrate that we actually need to have an action in the first place.

The second thing is though no need has actually been established, we still throw around this term that we need it as if we really do. So let's ask ourselves a question: What is this nebulous assumed need that everyone is talking about?

The need is actually space for storage. So the question then becomes, if we implement the Yucca Mountain plan, does it solve for this need of space? And temporarily you could say that the answer is yes.

But what happens when the Yucca Mountain facility gets full? You are always going to need more space because the source of the nuclear waste is left untouched. So you are always going to have nuclear waste, and you are always going to be looking for space for it.

So in the long term, nothing is achieved by passing this Yucca Mountain proposal. Nuclear waste continues to be created, and space to store the nuclear waste will always be sought after. Which is another reason why maybe we ought to go back to the drawing board and consider whether or not it's even a good idea that we have nuclear power.

2... Anyway, continuing on, [let's look to the benefits of having the Yucca Mountain proposal, and let's look to the disadvantages.

Now supposedly the benefits are for Nevada, let's look at Nevada. Nevada would supposedly get more employment, we could connect the state by rail line, we could have the focus of the Nevada economy shift towards more technical fields because there is going to be all

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Well, notice that most of these positives are primarily economic, whereas the disadvantages that everyone is talking about here tonight are risks of accidents in transportation, which would lead to contamination of waterways and airways and sickness and death.

Another thing that's been talked about is health risks to employees and residents.

I mean, we're talking about nuclear waste from 77 sites here all in one place. This is a huge magnitude of waste. So there is going to be a lot of radiation coming from this huge magnitude of waste. More radiation is going to be coming out of this one spot than there is at any of the one sites right now.

Another thing, too, is that environmental harm, such as contamination of drinking water, and the risks of earthquakes, all of these kinds of things here that have all been mentioned by previous speakers all demonstrate that if you are going to compare these economic advantages of employment which we're going to have for a little while and connecting Nevada by rail line, if you compare these things, if you compare the money, the dollars, to quality of life, quality of the environment, there is really no contest here. So you can see that once again, this plan is failing on even demonstrating that it's beneficial. It is actually showing that it is more disadvantageous if we adopt the plan.

So at this point it seems pretty clear that the Yucca Mountain proposal isn't a very good one, but here is the key question right here. Would this be, if we did adopt it, the best course of action?

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There is another problem. There are no proposed alternatives. Once again looking back to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act which Congress has given to us, they tell the DOE that they do not need to look at alternatives to geologic disposal or alternatives to Yucca Mountain as a site.

So you got two big problems here. We can't look at other sites, and we can't even look at other ways to treat the waste.

Now, why am I bringing all of this up here? Because what

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I want to show to you what this big picture is, in seeing that the

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Yucca Mountain proposal has not demonstrated that we really need it, the Yucca Mountain proposal fails to solve the assumed need of space of where we're going to put the nuclear waste, and that the proposal is not even beneficial, and it has not been shown to be the best, it's obviously not sound policy making when you look to what Congress has decided to do with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

This means that Nevadans -- and I'm glad to see the people out here tonight. I'm glad that you guys are telling the Department of Energy that you have demands that you want our civic leaders to meet, and they need to.

But this is another thing, too, that I want the Department of Energy to take in tonight. It's important that the experts who are here in this room, and right now I only see one, but nevertheless, the experts who are here in this room, I mean you as I think an individual, I'm very sure that you know where I'm coming from here when I'm saying that, okay, logically speaking, we haven't even demonstrated that we need to have a repository. We don't even have to look at whether or not we need a repository.

Doesn't that seem weird to you? As a thinking individual, why would you implement a plan you can't even demonstrate you actually need to do?

So you yourself have grounds alone to reject this proposal, to reject this policy, and not cow-tow to Congress, because the Department of Energy and also the Environmental Protection Agency, those are the experts who should be telling Congress what to do, not the other way around. So what I would like to ask the Department of Energy to do is go ahead and exercise your power to say to Congress, you know what, you made a couple of bad moves here by passing the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, and we don't agree with what you are trying to tell us to do because we have consciences. We also agree with a lot of the things Nevadans have said because they have asked a lot of good questions which you as Congress for some reason or another don't want to look at.

I think that the Department of Energy in its right mind should turn this plan around and say no, Congress, go back to the drawing board. We as experts are going to tell you what is the best

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1 cont. idea because right now the approach is bad, and the policy as it
stands is also very flawed. Thank you.

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